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Will. Tertii 1. Angliae, &c. Nono.*

THIS Court doth desire Mr. *Eftwick*  
to Print his Sermon preached at  
the Cathedral-Church of *St. Paul*, on  
*Sunday* last, before the Lord Mayor,  
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*Goodfellow.*

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A  
**S E R M O N**

Preached at the 8.

*Cathedral-Church of St. Paul,*

Before the Right Honourable the

**LORD MAYOR,**  
**Judges, and Aldermen.**

*January 30. 1698.*

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By *SAMPSON ESTWICK*,  
B.D. and Chaplain of *Christ-Church Oxon.*

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*L O N D O N,*

Printed for *The. Bennet*, at the *Half-moon* in *St. Paul's*  
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J A M E S I. xxi. The latter part of the Verse.

*And receive with meekness, the engraffed word, which is able to save your Souls.*

**I**T is a Matter worthy our Observation, that when the fullness of time was come ; that God sent his Son into the world to reform Mankind ; it seemed good to Divine Wisdom to make way for his appearance, not only by Types and Figures and Prophetical Predictions, but also by the propagation of such previous notions, that very much forwarded and disposed Men for the Reception of his Gospel : For as our Blessed Lord had his Messengers and Forerunners to prepare his way, so likewise those new Truths he declared to the World, had their Harbingers to gain a more easie admittance in the Minds of Men.

To this purpose St. Paul tells us, *Rom. 1. 17.* that the *righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith* ; which seems to imply, that the belief of the One God, of his Veracity, Power, Wisdom and Goodness did very much tend to the belief of the Gospel ; and that those previous Principles of

God Almighty's being the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the Universe, being joyned to those natural impressions of Conscience, as that Man is a Being capable of reward and punishment, and the like, are of great moment in the case before us, and ought to be esteemed great preparatives to encline Men to receive the last and most perfect will of God, as delivered by his Son.

For this reason it seem'd good to the Wisdom and Providence of God so to order humane affairs, that those very punishments that were inflicted on the *Jews* for their sins, were instrumental to promote this end, and the dispersion of this People among foreign Nations, did not a little tend to propagate the knowledge of the true God amongst those with whom they convers'd. Thus by the Captivity of *Judah* God made himself known over the *Babylonian* and *Persian* Monarchy : For by the Decree of *Darius*, it was ordain'd that in every dominion of his Kingdom, Men fear and tremble before the God of *Daniel* ; for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed : Dan. 6. 25, 26. And that the knowledge of the One God might be preserved amongst these foreign Nations, where they sojourn'd, Divine Providence so ordered it, that when all the *Jews* had liberty to return to their own Country, great numbers staid behind in *Babylon*, where, as may well be presum'd, they freely exercis'd their Religion, and made many Converts to the belief of the One God. In like manner by the same methods of Providence, when the *Grecian* Empire had swallowed up the *Persian*, as the *Roman* afterwards did that, the several insults that each made upon the Jewish Nation serv'd to encrease and spread abroad the knowledge of the One God, and thereby prepar'd the way for the Kingdom of the *Messias* ; that Kingdom which the Prophet *Daniel* tells us the God of Heaven would set up, which should never be destroyed. Here therefore

if we descend to the first establishment of Christ's Kingdom, and consider the accounts given us by the Holy Writers of the first Age of the Gospel, we shall find two sorts of persons thus qualified and prepared for it, *viz.* Jews and Proselytes: the latter of which were such who either by Circumcision undertook the observation of the *Mosaical* Law, or at least such as renounc'd all the Heathen Idolatries, and worshiped no other God but the God of *Israel*. The number of these last, we are told by our learned Divines, was much greater than that of circumcis'd Proselytes: and according to Mr. *Mead*, there is frequent mention made of them in Scripture, under the name of *Worshipping Greeks*, and *Devout Men*, and such as fear'd God. When St. *Paul* preach'd at *Thessalonica*, it is said there *consorted with Paul and Silas of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not few*, *Acts 17. 4.* The name of *Greeks* proves them to be Gentiles, not *Jews*; and that they were *οἰδότες*, devout or worshiping *Greeks*, proves that they were the worshipers of the God of *Israel*: who by frequenting the *Jewish Synagogue* shewed that they were no Idolaters, seeing no Gentiles resorted thither, but those who worshiped the God of *Israel*. Of this number was *Lydia*, *Cornelius*, and others mention'd in the *Acts*, who being worshipers of the True God, and instructed in the Law and the Prophets, were thus fitted and prepared to receive the Gospel, when it was preached to them. Of this number, it is probable, were most of those, whom on the day of *Pentecost*, resorted to *Hierusalem* from many quarters of the world; who being ready dispos'd, and prepar'd to receive the Doctrine of Eternal Life, are said to be *τεταχθέντες*, *i. e.* according to Mr. *Mead*, they were rather qualified, than ordained to receive it. For by believing in One God, and acknowledging his Infinite Perfections, they had all the preparations the *Jews* had for Christianity without their prejudices; and having neither a fondness for their Ceremonial Worship, nor

for the temporal Kingdom of the *Messias*, are said to be glad, and to glorifie the Word of the Lord, when they heard the glad tydings of Salvation preach'd to 'em.

From what I have hitherto said, we may perceive, that Divine Wisdom did not think fit to make a full discovery of his Will, till Men were in some measure prepared with previous Notions to give it a due reception ; and our Lord's Gospel being gradually usher'd in, was not like a Torrent design'd by irresistible Force to bear down all things before it, but to make its way by more easie methods, from some things taken for granted, to enforce the necessity of believing others ; or now, to use the Apostles terms, the Divine Word was not to be engraffed upon Nature, till it was prepared for it by antecedent principles, suitable to render it effectual for those good ends and purposes for which it was intended.

Thus much may suffice to be said in relation to the first Converts to Christianity, who indeed upon some accounts ought to be distinguish'd from their Successors, in as much as these being admitted into the Gospel Covenant by Infant Baptism, are usually at the same time grounded in natural and revealed principles : However, in the regular order of things, the one sort ought to preceed the other, yet custom may convince us that the rudiments of Morality and Faith are instill'd at the same time ; and this we may justly account a very great advantage, whensoever this is done in a due manner ; yet we must say that when this is done as it ought to be, and tender years are fed with the milk of God's word, and taught first that God is, and then that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him ; yet the corruption of Nature and Manners is such, that after a good Education, there is need of a constant care and concern to preserve as well as improve the Principles of revealed Religion :

on : and our own endeavours under the influence of God's Grace are very requisite, to call in all the aids and assistances from Morality to prepare us for the Grace of the Gospel. In short, we ought to use all the helps that are afforded us to gain such good dispositions of mind, that may qualify us for a due reception of God's word. We must receive with meekness the ingrafted word, *which is able to save our Souls* : In which Exhortation we have three things considerable.

1. The Object which the Apostle terms the ingrafted Word.
2. The Property ascribed to it, that it is able to save our Souls.
3. The Qualification how it must be received, *viz.* with meekness.

By the ingrafted Word, we are to understand the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which began to be engrailed or planted in the hearts of Men, when our Lord and his Apostles entered on the Ministry : it is sometimes called the Grace of God, bringing Salvation ; the Wisdom of God in a Mystery ; the Gospel of the Glory of Christ ; the word of Reconciliation, which with many more appellations denote the excellencies of this last, and perfect revelation of God's Will delivered to the Sons of Men. Our Apostle in the 18. v. of this chap. calls it the word of Truth, when he says, *of his own will be at he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his Creatures.*

And under this acceptation, I shall at present consider it as God's truth delivered by his Apostles.

In treating of which it may be needful to premise, that as Men were to be instructed in the Principles of the Christian Religion, it pleased Divine Wisdom to sanctifie and set apart an Order of Men, who were to be Ambassadors for Christ, and Stewards of the manifold Mysteries of God, who being called by him to this Ministry, were to employ their Time and Talents, and their severall Gifts and Graces for the good of Souls, for the edifying of the Church of Christ, which is his Body: In order then, to discharge this great trust committed to 'em, there were many difficulties to be encountered, many hardships to be grappled with: His Servants sent out to preach his truth, were not only to wrestle with flesh and blood, but against Principalities and Powers; not only to deny themselves the pleasures and enjoyments of this life, but to raise their batteries against spiritual wickedness in high places, against Superstition and Idolatry, against the sinful lusts of the flesh, and the usurped Empire of Satan, who by a long prescription claim'd a sort of right to command and govern the wills and minds of Men.

And who were sufficient for these great undertakings, and by what means were these difficulties to be assu'd? viz. by the labour of plain illiterate Men, attesting some few plain matters of Fact, and that without any present advantage to themselves, without the usual baits of Honours and Temporal Rewards, without being sure of any thing here, but Persecution for professing the Name of Christ: what temptation could there be to make Men forgo even the innocent enjoyments of this life, only to disquiet and afflict themselves? And as no wicked Man can be well preserv'd to act so much against his own interest as to run himself upon imminent dangers, only to maintain falsehoods, so, most certainly, no good Man can be allow'd to do this, and

and at the same time to bid defiance to Divine Vengeance, and to sport with Damnation, and all the while to get no thing by it, but a miserable life, and an ignominious death.

If therefore we only consider the Apostles as witnesses of plain matter of Fact, and allow 'em to be Men of Probity, Veracity, and Fidelity ; it will be hard to account for the Scepticism of this age, and to give a sufficient reason, why their testimony ought not to be credited in those transactions, that they themselves were Eye-witnesses of.

This sort of reasoning carries so much force with it, that it makes the Gospel a word of Truth highly credible, and gives the Preachers of it as good Credentials, as are usually requisite amongst Men to support matters of Fact.

For what do we require in this case, but the knowledge of those things related, and the Veracity of the Witnesses ? and when for instance, there are so many Witnesses asserting with so much constancy our Lord's Resurrection, what fuller and better assurance can we have for the truth of any thing, than we have for the reality of this Fact ?

Nay, if it be true, that moral certainty admits of degrees, why may we not be said to be more certain of this particular fact, than of most of those recorded of *Alexander* and *Julius Cesar*, which as yet find credit amongst the learned part of Mankind ? Whoever then has but a moderate regard for truth, if he will be just to himself, cannot but receive it, when sufficiently attested, and give it such a reception as becomes a reasonable Creature, that can consider, compare, and reflect on past actions, and weigh the true grounds and motives of Credibility.

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And however, the result of this would be only what our Divines call a Historical Faith, which some make to differ gradually, others specifically from that living Faith which works by love; yet thus much may be affirm'd, that notwithstanding the former has been undervalu'd, when comparatively considered with the latter, yet like the foundation of a building, it is needful to be lay'd, before we can proceed to the Superstructure: Or in other terms, we must believe the Apostles as true Witnesses of Fact, and so receive the Gospel, as a word of Truth, before we can ascribe these high Characters given to it by the holy Writers, as able to make us wise unto Salvation, as able to save our Souls.

To receive the Word under this last acceptation, is to receive it as God's Word, first propounded, and then witnessed by himself. For, as Bishop Pearson says, *God does not bear testimony to something before doubted of, or call'd in question by Man; but he is then said to witness when he doth propound, and his testimony is given by way of Revelation, which is nothing else but the delivery of his will to his Creatures.*

Now, as there is nothing more certain than that God Almighty can make such impressions upon the minds of his Creatures to signifie his Will and Pleasure to 'em, whenever it seems good to his Wisdom, so it is no less certain that he can give sufficient assurance, that those impressions proceed from himself; that is, by displaying some Rays of infinite Knowledge and Power, by foretelling something to come, and doing something beyond the compass of natural Causes, he can give such indications of his Will, that cannot possibly be ascribed to Man as Author, because Man of himself can neither foretell what shall be hereafter, nor do any thing above the compass of Nature. What-

Whatever Revelation has these two Seals joynlytly affix'd to it, *viz.* the testimony of Prophecy and Miracles, must as surely be true, as God is true, it stands upon such a firm foundation of Divine Goodnes and Truth, that all the power of Men or bad Angels can no more shake it, than they can dissolve the Universe. Divine Goodnes will not let his Creature be deceiv'd, and his Truth cannot permit it, when each of these testimonies joynlytly concurr to the manifestation of his Will and Pleasure: and consequently whatever instruments he is pleas'd to make use of to declare his Will to Men, if they bring these Credentials with them, ought to be credited as much in the delivery of his Word, as if he himself immediately spake to 'em from Heaven.

Upon this firm Basis it is, upon which the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ rests and depends; for the Confirmation of which, we have these several Testimonies; that what the Apostles spake, they spake not of themselves, but as they were mov'd by the Holy Spirit of God. We have the Testimony of the Father, declaring our Saviour to be his *beloved Son in whom he was well pleased*, the Attestation of his Son, when veil'd in our flesh, answering the description given him by the Prophets, and fulfilling their Predictions, by working Miracles, as were fore-signified by them. And for a farther Confirmation that our Blessed Lord was the Person pointed at in the Prophetical Writings, we have not only a Demonstration of exceeding great Power, *viz.* his Resurrection from the Dead, by which his former Sufferings were consecrated, and himself in our Nature own'd and approv'd of God; but the same Blessed Spirit which spake by the Prophets, bearing witness to

the Apostles with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts, according to his own Will.

So that here we have not only the bare concurrence of Prophesies and Miracles ascertaining the truth of the Gospel, but the three Divine Persons of the ever Blessed Trinity bearing Record to it, with often repeated Testimonies, that our Lord was the Saviour of the World, *and that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Upon these Motives of Credibility, we may safely affirm, that the Gospel is the very Word of God, able to save our Souls; and that our Lord's Apostles acted by Divine Authority, and receiv'd their Commission from Heaven; when they began to publish it to the world, and with great Power gave Witness of our Lord's Resurrection.

And so I proceed to the other General Head, and shall consider the Qualification, how we are to receive the Word, *viz. with meekness.*

In treating of which, I shall *first* shew, what this Virtue is. *Secondly*, how it stands in relation to other things that are thought to resemble it. *Thirdly*, how very requisite and necessary it is in the present state we are in.

Before I tell you what it is, give me leave to observe, that there are some Virtues so peculiar to the Christian Oeconomy, that they seem appropriated to it, such as Faith, Humility and Meekness, the two former are not mention'd by Moral Writers, the last tho hand-led

led by 'em, yet in a sense different from what the Holy Writers sometimes use it in.

The Moralist considers Meekness, chiefly with relation to Anger, and keeping that Passion in due bounds, whereas in this and some other places of Scripture, it must be taken in a much larger sense, as implying a tractableness and ingenuity of spirit, well disposed to receive the truths of the Gospel contained in the Scriptures, and dispensed by the Ministers of it. Our Blessed Saviour says to his Disciples, they must learn of him, *who is meek and lowly*, implying that this was to be the first Lesson that was to be learnt in his School; and to signify the governableness of the Christian Spirit, the Good Christian is liken'd to Creatures most harmless and tractable, and easiest to be guided; and when our Lord makes himself the good Shepherd, his followers are to be the most governable of all Creatures, the good Sheep that hearken to his voice.

This in a great measure is inculcated by St. *Paul*, when he says, we must captivate our understandings to the Obedience of Faith, and bring in subjection every thought that exalteth it self against the knowledge of Christ: which with many other passages teach us, what kind of Temper and Spirit this is, especially when we are commanded to lay aside our fond opinions, and conceits, and every thought that exalteth it self against the knowledge of Christ, which hinder us from submitting our selves to the Government of his Laws.

In short, it is such a good disposition of mind that prepares and fits Men for the reception of the Gospel, for

which reason St. Peter calls it an ornament of great value in the sight of God. It is also such a disposition, that may be under the influence of Grace, acquired by prudential Motives and Considerations, such as the Notions of God's Infinite Power, Justice, and Truth; the presages of Conscience, that rewards and punishments must be distributed equally some time or other, together with the natural intimations of the Souls immortality: these I say, with many other previous Notions, are in their nature apt to make Men tractable, and ready to receive the Gospel, when tender'd to 'em.

And as this good disposition may be acquir'd by these and the like considerations; for this reason, we ought to distinguish it from some things that are thought to bear a resemblance to it. *First*, It ought to be distinguished from Nature, which being corrupted and defiled by the first Transgression, is the greatest Obstacle and Hindrance of a ready and cheerful Obedience to God's Commands.

*Secondly*, This good disposition and tractableness of Spirit ought to be distinguish'd from what we call good Nature, because this has a regard chiefly to civil Conversation betwixt Man and Man, and discovers it self either by doing or receiving good Offices, and that with a desire to please and oblige others.

Now, altho this is a very commendable temper, and highly to be valu'd in whomsoever it is to be found; yet strictly speaking the good effects of it, *viz.* doing good Offices, is not the product of Nature, but Divine Grace: For if good nature is left uncultivated, what will it bring forth besides Weeds and Brambles? Unless it is first well order'd

order'd and drest by a virtuous Education, and afterwards fenc'd in with good Precepts and Admonitions, how is it apt to transgress the bounds God Almighty has fix'd, and to fly out into all kind of Excesses? Who is sooner or more easily undone, than the good natur'd Man? and who are reckoned better natur'd amongst their Comrades than those unhappy Men, so undone? The good-natur'd Man seems to hang in an equal poise betwixt Virtue and Vice, and in some measure may be liken'd to softned Wax, which is capable of receiving very Beautiful Impressions, but the same softnes without due care and art, shall no less contribute to monstrous deformities?

If the whole mass of Mankind be tainted and polluted, and God's Image defac'd, if the Scriptures have concluded all under sin, consequently all are so far forth ill-natur'd, and whatever ground there is for this distinction among our selves, every individual nature must be changed and renewed, before we can be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; and as no Nature is so bad, but it may be corrected and mend-ed, if due care and discipline be not wanting, so no nature is so good, but what stands in need of the Heavenly Doctrine to be planted and engrrafted upon it.

*Thirdly*, This tractable and good Disposition ought to be more especially distinguish'd from a contemptible, mean, abject Spirit, which is a character profane Men are wont to affix upon this excellent Qualification.

For if the *Gospel* be the word of Truth, *able to save our souls*, it can be no diminution to us to believe it, and in proportion it can be no disparagement to be prepared with suitable dispositions for the reception of it: For if it be found to be true that by believing what God has reveal'd, we not only do justice to our selves as reasonable Creatures, but at the same time consult the Honour and Dignity of our Nature, by receiving such worthy Notions as are every way adapted to advance Men to the highest pitch of virtuous attainments; whatever consequently is in order to this, I mean those good dispositions that fit the soil for the Seed of God's Word, so far as they contribute to this, add a lustre to us by ennobling Humane Nature, and instead of debasing it, raises it to a much higher degree of Perfection.

On the other side, he more properly may be said to have this mean abject Spirit, who not improving the sparks of Reason, cannot be wrought upon to honour himself by submitting to our Redeemer's Laws.

*Fourthly*, This tractable meek Spirit, ought to be distinguished also from that mean abject Spirit that takes shelter in an implicit Faith. Implicit Faith I take to be nothing less than ignorance garnish'd and set off with a plausible word, that has no meaning: For if Faith, as a great Author says, is an actual assent to something propos'd as credible, consequently when it wants that actual assent, it wants the principal support of its being; now by the addition of this word Implicit, we are rob'd of that main ingredient that constitutes the very Essence of it. For to say a Man believes as the Church believes, and at the same time not to be able to say what the Church believes in particular, is in the result to believe nothing.

nothing. Now this, I say, is an evidence of a mean abject Spirit, as contrary to the temper of Christianity as light is to darkness. For by this we are not only allowed, but commanded to search and examine the truth of what is delivered. Our Blessed Lord bids us search the Scriptures, and his Apostle recommends the same diligence, when he says, we should always be ready to give an answer of the reason of the hope that is in us. Instead of doing this, implicit Faith discards all Reasons and Motives of Credibility, closes and seals up the eyes and lips of the votary, and thereby exposes him to all the fancies and extravagancies that Seducers can suggest to him.

This seems to be one of the unhappy Parents of those gross practices us'd in the Church of *Rome*, the Mother of that blind Devotion that defiles their Sanctuaries, by establishing the Worship of Images and Dead Men, which are such gross Impostures, that could never have pass'd upon the world, unless the way had been first daub'd over by the varnish of Infallibility and Implicit Faith; unless men had been perswaded first their Leaders could not err, and then that they were to take it upon their word, that they had not err'd, thereby superseeding the pains and trouble of enquiring whether these practices were conformable to the Standard of our Faith.

This indeed, whatever shew of meekness may be pretended, is far remov'd from the true Spirit and Genius of it, for this is accompanied with care and watchfulness, that one is not deceiv'd in the great concerns of Salvation. If Faith in Christ Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, if reconciliation and pardon upon Repentance and the

the promises and threats of eternal rewards and punishments, are such Doctrines that are of greatest importance to Men, and we are assured that according to the Tenour of the Gospel, Men are to be damn'd for not believing and repenting, these consequently ought to be explicitly known, and in order to it ought to be dwelt and insisted on by the Ministers of God's Word, and often attended to by every devout Soul.

After this is done as it ought to be, and the Preacher has enforc'd the necessity of these fundamental points, instead of reading a Legend on a Saint, unless the hearer brings an honest and good heart with him, and is ready and willing to bestow a due care and application in using all the helps afforded for Salvation ; our Saviour in the Parable of the Sower at large, acquaints us what is like to be the effect of this, either something from without or within, shall render his word unsuccesful, as you may find at large in the 13. of St. Matthew's Gospel.

I proceed 3dly, to shew how necessary this Qualification of meekness is to us in the state we are in, and that with reference only to the Mysteries of Faith.

In relation to which, we cannot but confess there are many things propos'd to our belief hard to be conceiv'd, and in this imperfect state we are in, not to be fully comprehended. We that see but thro' a Glafs, as the Apostle says, thro' a Glafs of flesh and blood, can expect but a glimpse, a far distant view, of what is hereafter to be revealed. There seems to be much contained in those few words of the Apostles, we walk by Faith, not by Sight, intimating thereby that Faith has its dark side, such a vail thrown over it never to be separated from it till it terminates in Vision.

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Men indeed may Cavil at Mysteries, as one has lately done, and tell us, they are not such when reveal'd, but unless they could assure us of the reasons of 'em, of the Modes and Circumstances belonging to 'em, of their congruity and fitness to bring about the great ends design'd by 'em, they must still continue Mysteries after they are reveal'd.

They are not so indeed for that very reason; but because after the Revelation we are left in obscurity, it seeming good to Divine Wisdom, to tell us such things are so, without letting us into the Reasons, Modes, and Circumstances why and how they are so.

Thus to give you one signal instance, we are assured in *1. Tim. 3. Ch. 16. v. 1* of Scripture, that God was manifested in the Flesh, and the same Scripture affirms this to be a great Mystery: And indeed it is so, which way soever we understand it, whether according to the *Orthodox* or *Sosinian* interpretation of these words; if according to the Analogy of Faith we receive 'em in the former fence, it seems hard to be conceiv'd how God and Man can subsist in the same Person; if according to the *Socinian* Gloss, our Saviour was not God, it is much more difficult to be accounted for, how a meer Man can be made a God, and so be made capable of that Essential Honour and Worship that belongs to the Divine Nature.

Which way soever the Controversie turns, the Mystery of it continues still, and must continue till time shall be no more, till dust and ashes is able to comprehend Infinity. In this case whatever assistance we crave from Reason, Reason rightly informed will tell us, First, That this is not a matter that lies properly within her Virge and Jurisdiction: She claims a right indeed to

D judge

judge and determine upon objects of sense, and to draw Conclusions flowing from natural principles, but whether the word was made Flesh, and took unto himself the Manhood, rests solely upon the Authority of Divine Revelation, and cannot be gain-said by right Reason, unless the belief of it involv'd us in a manifest Contradiction; But how can that be truly said in the Case before us: For are we able to fathom the depths of Wisdom, and to tell precisely the Properties of an infinite Spirit, by what Laws it acts by and directs its self, so as to say peremptorily this cannot be? are we so well acquainted with each term of the Contradiction, as to make one inconsistent with the other? unless this could be done the pretended Plea must vanish and come to nought and this great Mystery of Faith ought to be accordingly understood in the Catholick sense, by every true Member of the Catholick Church.

This is a Case, I say, that does not lie properly before the Bar of reason; it is true indeed, if reason would confine her self, within her own district, and content her self with a subordinate power of examining and comparing Spiritual things with Spiritual; if she would but suffer her self to be guided and directed by unerring Wisdom, she might then as a Substitute and Vicegerent be allowed to enjoy an undisturb'd Government; but when she mounts the Throne and dictates her Laws against the Laws of Heaven, what havock does she make in the Church of God, how does she mangle and curtail the Holy Writings, and even put plain words to the Torture to confess what they never meant, and that only to establish a new Set of Opinions either for gain, popular applause, or some other worldly end. Thus the pretended *Vicar of Rome* seats himself and carnal reason upon a Throne, whilst the Scriptures are plac'd at his foot-

foot-stool, and put to the vile drudgery of supporting his Ambition, Tyranny, and Usurpation, and then when once the infallible Stamp is put upon the Sacred Paper, thou art *Peter*, and feed my Sheep, are made to bear him out, and give him a sufficient warrant for so doing.

Thus in like manner bold *Socinus*, *Crellius*, and the rest of their Fraternity, erase the old Foundations, remove the old Landmarks, put such a forc'd interpretation upon many passages of Scripture, that the Church of God never knew nor own'd; they give us in many instances a new Language without the help of a new Grammar or Dictionary: and how comes this about, why their reason being too nice and delicate to digest Mysteries, cannot admit of God's Truth when dissonant from the Principles they have at first espoused; If the Holy Scriptures will not accord with them they must be made to do it, they must be perverted, and thereby forc'd to maintain and speak up for 'em; and then when it is said, *before Abraham was I am*, no more must be meant, but that our Lord was, before this Prophecy was fulfilled, the Glory that he had before the world, must be the Glory he had some thousands of years after; when it is also said of him, *That he was in the beginning, and all things were made by him*, the beginning must signify the present time, or at least that time when *John* the Baptist began his Ministry, and then all things that were made by him, must denote the dispensation of the Gospel, that now began to be published to the world. And what is this but to give us a new Scripture, a new Gospel, a Gospel so very much exposed, that if those that debase it so much have lost all modesty, we must be forced to blush for 'em, and for that reason shall hide their deformities by throwing a veil over 'em.

Thus when Men will be wiser than God, and set up their own fancies in opposition to the dictates of Heaven, when instead of Captivating their reason and understanding to the obedience of Faith, they raise 'em to such vast heights as turn their heads, how far removed are they from that tractableness and meekness of Spirit that the Gospel calls for, requiring a readiness to believe whatever is there proposed, tho' not alway to be fathom'd by the short line of Reason, not alway to be accounted for by the narrow principles of sense ; we are sometimes required to follow our Lord thro' intricate paths, and obliged to trust him as our Master and Guide that will not, that cannot deceive us. We must trace him thro' dark Labyrinths, and suffer our selves to be puzzled, to be baffled by his over-ruling Wisdom, rather than falter or draw back, after we have listed our selves in his Service.

We must follow him beyond the Regions of death, and with the Eye of Faith behold him as our Judge, a mercifull as well as upright Judge, that is well acquainted with humane infirmities, and will therefore be ready to make all the favourable allowances for the frailties of humane nature ; we must behold him according to his promise, rewarding the obedience of sincere penitents and in pursuance of his threats, consigning obstinate and rebellious sinners to an endless duration of torments.

And this is a consideration that all being concern'd in ought nearly to touch us all, and as every one of us must be sentenced according as we have well or ill demeaned our selves in this our day of probation, how ought this

this to work in us a ready compliance to the terms of his Gospel according to which we must be judged at the great day.

In short, with what Meekness, Resignation, and humble submission ought we to receive that Word, according to which we are to be acquitted or condemned !

And because of our selves we are able to do nothing of our selves without the assistance of Divine Grace : Let us beseech God to enable us to do his Will, that after this painful life ended, when the great Judge pronounces the final Sentence, every one of us may be found at his right hand to praise and magnifie his infinite mercy to all eternity.

*To whom, with the Father and blessed Spirit, be ascrib'd, as is most due, all Honour, Glory, Might, Majesty and Dominion, from this time forth, and for ever. Amen.*

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*F. I. N. I. S.*

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